

VZCZCXRO6006  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHJM #1971/01 3060827  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 020827Z NOV 09  
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6516  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001971

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, SEMEP, AND IPA. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR.

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN RECONCILIATION TO THE PA UPDATES ON GOE  
INTRA-PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION STRATEGY

REF: JERUSALEM 1891

Classified By: CG Daniel Rubinstein for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. In an October 28 meeting with the Consul General in Jerusalem, Egyptian Representative to the PA Yasir Othman provided an update on Fatah-Hamas reconciliation efforts. He said the GOE continues to press Hamas to sign a draft Egyptian reconciliation text, but does not anticipate that Hamas will do so, due to opposition from Syria, Iran, and the Hamas military wing in Gaza. For the GOE, the most important part of the agreement is a joint security committee under "Arab supervision," which will supposedly pave the way to remobilize PA security forces in Gaza. He acknowledged USG concerns over the GOE strategy, but insisted it remains preferable to the status quo. Othman said reconciliation through elections must occur before Abu Mazen can engage seriously in negotiations with the GOI. End Summary.

GOE Continues to Press Hamas to Sign,  
Knowing Hamas Remains Unready  
-----

¶2. (C) Othman began by noting that the GOE continues to press Hamas to sign a draft reconciliation proposal tabled earlier this month (reftel). However, Othman said, it is unlikely Hamas will sign in the near future. Gaza-based Hamas leaders Ismail Haniya and Mahmoud Zahar want to sign "with observations," he claimed, but Gaza military wing commander Ahmed Ja'bari remains adamantly opposed, since the current Egyptian text prohibits "unauthorized military structures." Hamas' Damascus-based leadership is also being pressured by Iran and Syria not to sign, he claimed.

¶3. (C) As a result, Othman said, "our assessment is that Mish'al is buying time" and cannot agree to the current text. Nonetheless, the GOE continues to press Hamas to agree. "Our position remains the same," Othman said, adding, "Abu Mazen has signed already. With Hamas, we are saying come to Cairo, sign, and then we can discuss your reservations." The Consul General noted the importance of USG-GOE consultations before taking any additional steps.

For GOE, Security Committee Key  
-----

¶4. (C) For the GOE, Othman noted, the joint security committee is the most important component of the reconciliation proposal, as it would supervise implementation of key aspects of the agreement, such as Palestinian elections. Othman said the committee would be under the supervision of Egyptian and Arab personnel based in Gaza. By calling for the remobilization of 3,000 PA security force members in Gaza, it would allow the PA to re-establish a foothold there. He acknowledged that, on paper, the committee's mandate would extend to PA security forces in the West Bank as well, but the GOE had kept the language on this

point "intentionally vague" in order to exploit the  
"constructive ambiguity" in its discussions with Hamas.

Political Rollback of Hamas Control  
Only Viable Strategy for Gaza  
-----

¶5. (C) "Hamas is a reality on the ground," Othman noted, and rolling back its control can only be accomplished over time. He admitted that the agreement "shelves" the issue of demobilizing Hamas' military wing (the Izzedin al Qassam Brigades) for now. "The Qassam brigades are a fact on the ground and cannot be addressed right away," he said, comparing the approach to that adopted by the international community toward Hizballah's military wing in Lebanon. What the GOE proposal offers, he said, is for the PA to move from a situation in which it has no control over Gaza to one in which it has "partial" influence there.

Flawed Reconciliation Preferable to Status Quo  
-----

¶6. (C) Othman acknowledged USG concerns over this approach. He defended the GOE strategy as an imperfect resolution to the situation for an interim phase only, between now and Palestinian elections. "It's not a permanent agreement," he said. He also warned of the dangers of continued stalemate. Hamas is solidifying its security and political control in Gaza, he noted. Control of the tunnel economy has strengthened its hand, and Hamas is buying up real estate, including significant portions of the evacuated Israeli settlements. Over the longer term, its policies are

JERUSALEM 00001971 002 OF 002

contributing to a "lost generation" of Gazans subjected to Hamas' educational and social policies.

¶7. (C) Stalemate also does not benefit Hamas' interests, Othman said. He claimed resistance to Hamas' authority is growing among disaffected ideologues, some of whom have split off from Hamas' military wing to join Salafist groups. While these problems do not challenge Hamas' control, they increasingly complicate its ability to advance a coherent agenda. He also said that the "lesson" the GOE had learned from Hamas' decision to breach the border fence in January 2008 is that the situation cannot be left to fester. "Gaza is a time bomb," he said, "and it will explode in someone's face" if the status quo prevails.

¶8. (C) Othman then provided his assessment of how reconciliation affects the USG's effort to restart Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. "Abu Mazen can't sign an agreement without reconciliation," he said. Othman cautioned that the absence of a political horizon for Palestinians, and efforts by rejectionists to exploit tensions over Jerusalem, were further undermining peacemaking efforts. "So our assessment is that the only way Abu Mazen can move forward is through elections."

Comment  
-----

¶9. (C) We have generally found Othman a candid interlocutor on reconciliation and other issues, though we defer to Embassy Cairo as to the extent his statements accurately reflect GOE policy. The GOE's preferred sequence of reconciliation before negotiations may present problems, though it is not inconsistent with Fatah's own strategy of renewing its legitimacy through Palestinian elections (or by painting Hamas as the party standing in the way of elections).

RUBINSTEIN